

10 March 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant for Information/DDA
Chief, Information Systems Analysis Staff/DDA

FROM:
Classification Officer

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SUBJECT: Classification Abuse Inspections

Executive Order 11652 and the implementing NSC Directive require agencies to develop inspection systems for finding, correcting and preventing abuses of classification authority. Presently the Agency has no system to comply with this provision, yet we must still prepare a quarterly report to the Interagency Classification Review Committee (ICRC) on CIA Classification Abuses. (A loose system for catching erroneously classified correspondence existed in the Information & Privacy Staff/DDA when they were handling this report.) To eliminate abuses and carelessness in the application of classification we must develop a strong inspection program in connection with active re-training. Incidentally, of the total number of documents created in 1975 throughout the Agency, 34 were reported to the ICRC as improperly classified. This astonishingly low figure is hardly accurate but it does point up the need for an inspection to find, correct and prevent classification abuses. The object of any program though is correction of the abuses, not more accurate numbers.

Briefly outlined below is a proposal for a classification inspection system which would bring a more disciplined approach to classification practices in the Agency. Please consider this idea and let me know if it's feasible.

The responsibility for insuring correct classification procedures should be with the Directorates. Therefore, I think each Directorate Records Management Officer should be tasked with scheduling periodic inspections of his Directorate's files to review classification markings and provide guidance on correct procedures. These inspections would only be cursory and should take no more than one hour or so a month. At specified intervals (perhaps quarterly), the RMOs would report their findings and actions taken to ISAS. This report would not compromise information or reveal individuals.

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Before inspections could begin, the RMOs would require detailed briefings on Executive Order 11652 and subsequent directives on classification so that they could instruct others. ISAS would give these initial briefings and continue to provide guidance on classification while monitoring the inspection process.

Such a system would be valuable in our attempt to consolidate Agency policy on classification. In doing these reviews and challenging classification decisions, we will gain insight into what criteria, if any, are being used. With these criteria we can publish consistent guidelines for application throughout the Agency. Problem areas in judgmental decisions can be resolved and incorporated into this policy guidance.



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